

## *Munāẓarah* Literature in Urdu: An Extra-Curricular Educational Input in Pakistan's Religious Education

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### Abstract

*This article looks at the institution of debate, the munāẓarah, in the religious education sector of Pakistan. It argues that the munāẓarah occupies an important position in madrasah education and the 'ulamā' create their identity around a core of differences from other sects, sub-sects and heretical or alien beliefs which are brought out in the open in munāẓarahs. Moreover, certain books and pamphlets embodying the form of argumentation and other features of the munāẓarah are part of the informal, extra-curricular reading material both of madrasah students and teachers as well as religious people outside it. This kind of literature emphasizes differences and, therefore, presumably predisposes those who are exposed to it to intolerance of the 'other'. However, the solution of this problem is not to ban such literature but to reduce Muslim anger and change government policies in the direction of avoiding violence.*



### Introduction

*Munāẓarah* is defined in *The Encyclopedia of Islam* as follows: "The scientific, in particular the theological-juridical, dispute on the one hand, the literary genre of the struggle for precedence on the other."<sup>1</sup> Among South Asian Muslims, however, it is associated with theological disputes almost to the exclusion of the other meanings given above. Traditionally, the *munāẓarah* was held before an audience and often in the presence of a powerful personage who sometimes acted as an arbitrator. It "was not only important for oral theological dispute" but also entered "theological literature."<sup>2</sup> There were rules for carrying out the debate (*ādāb al-jadal*) and treatises such as those laid down in *al-Risālah al-*

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<sup>1</sup> E. Wagner, "Munāẓarā" in C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs and the late CH. Pellat, eds. *Encyclopedia of Islam*, new edn. (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 7: 565.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 7: 566.

*Samarqandiyyah fi Ādāb al-Baḥṭh* of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Ashraf al-Samarqandī (d. ca. 690/1291), on the subject. In South Asian Islamic educational institutions (*madrasahs*) *al-Sharīfiyyah* of ‘Alī b. Muḥammad Mīr al-Sharīf al-Jurjānī (d. 816/1413) and the *Rashīdiyyah* of ‘Abd al-Rashīd b. Muṣṭafā Jaunpūrī (d. 1083/1672) are taught. Muhammad Turāb ‘Alī also wrote a manual in Urdu entitled *Mabādī-yi Munāẓarah* (1874) to teach the art and etiquette of disputation to those who had taken to arguing with each other on religious subjects in Urdu.<sup>3</sup> However, it is not from the written text in Arabic, which has to be mastered with considerable difficulty, that the art of disputation is learned. The most useful way of learning it is by the example provided by the teachers and the prayer leaders who deliver the Friday sermon in mosques and Urdu books refuting ideological opponents which are the focus of this article. Indeed, the art of the *munāẓarah* is at the heart of the teaching methodology in the *madrasahs* as lectures on subjects such as ‘*aqā’id*’ (beliefs); *fiqh* (the law) as the selection, emphases and exposition of the *aḥādīth* illustrate.

Since certain features of the oral *munāẓarah* to be described later enter into the literature about religious controversy in circulation in Pakistan, this literature is called the *munāẓarah* literature in this article irrespective of whether it was ever presented orally or not. As its purpose is refutation (*radd*) of the arguments of another sect, sub-sect (the distinctive beliefs of which are called *maslak*), heresy or an alien philosophy, it has also been referred to as *radd*-literature (or *radd*-texts) in my previous publications.<sup>4</sup>

## Objective and Methodology

The objective of this article is to examine some of the *munāẓarah* texts in the Urdu language which are in circulation among religious readers, both within and outside the *madrasahs*, with a view to understanding their major themes and how they are likely to influence the formation of ideological identity and its ‘other’ in Pakistan. While a number of controversies are touched upon, one major text—an account of an actual *munāẓarah* between two Sunnī sub-sects—will be presented in more detail so as to provide a deeper understanding of the *munāẓarah* tradition as a heuristic device.

<sup>3</sup> Zain Shirazi, “The ‘Publicity’ of Religious Discourse: The Munazarah and Sastrartha in Colonial North India,” paper read at the annual conference of British Association for South Asian Studies, (March, 2005), available at: <<http://staff.brad.ac.uk/akundu/basas/conference05/shirazi,%20zian.pdf>>.

<sup>4</sup> Tariq Rahman, “Madrasas: The Potential for Violence in Pakistan” in Jamal Malik, ed. *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?* (London and New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 2008), 70.

Urdu emerged as a major language of Islam in South Asia during the thirteenth/nineteenth century<sup>5</sup> and is also the language of the *munāẓarah*. Thus, when we examine the institution of the *munāẓarah* in South Asia, we are at the same time examining one major dimension of language-spread in the subcontinent.

The criterion for choosing the texts used for this study is their availability and circulation among religious people both within the *madrasahs* and outside them in Pakistan. Thus, while certain classical texts on the *munāẓarah* are absent, others, which are far less in scholarly worth, are present solely because they are regularly printed and disseminated to the public. The assumption here is that such texts, because of being in Urdu and because of their availability, feed into the worldview of religious people in Pakistan with which we are concerned here.

## Review of Literature

Relevant for the concerns of this article is an insightful paper by Zain Shirazi read out in the British Association of South Asian Studies on 12 May 2005 now available on the internet arguing that religious disputation was a “heuristic device for the development of religious identities” in north India during the British period.<sup>6</sup> However, the only detailed study of the *munāẓarah* as a social institution in South Asia still remains Avril A. Powell’s study of the debates between the Muslims and the Christian missionaries in north India before 1857.<sup>7</sup> This book tells us that the initial missionary attacks on Islam, such as the Urdu tract *Dīn-i Haqq kī Taḥqīq* (1842) by William Smith (d. 1859) and Charles Leupolt (d. 1884), who was a missionary in India from 1832 to 1874, went unnoticed. However, the missionary Carl Gottlieb Pfander (d. 1868), who argued with the ‘ulamā’ between 1844 to 1847 at Agra, provoked opposition. Finally, Maulvī Āl-i Ḥasan (d. 1287/1870) of Lucknow participated in a *munāẓarah* with Pfander in 1848 in Agra.<sup>8</sup> Even more publicized was Raḥmat Allāh Kayrānawī’s (d. 1308/1891) debate with Pfander in 1854 at Agra.<sup>9</sup> The rancour of these brushes with Christianity may have

<sup>5</sup> Tariq Rahman, “Urdu as an Islamic Language,” *Annual of Urdu Studies*, no. 21 (2006), 111.

<sup>6</sup> Zain Shirazi, “The ‘Publicity’ of Religious Discourse.”

<sup>7</sup> Avril A. Powell, *Muslims and Missionaries in Pre-Mutiny India* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1993).

<sup>8</sup> See, *ibid.*, 191.

<sup>9</sup> See for the detail account of the arguments of Raḥmat Allāh Kayrānawī in this *munāẓarah*, al-Imām al-‘Allāmah al-Shaykh Raḥmat Allāh b. Khalil al-Raḥmān al-‘Uthmānī al-Kayrānawī, *Izhār al-Haqq* (Doha, Qatar: Idārah Ihyā’ al-Turāth al-Islāmī, 1983). For its English translation see, Maulana Rahmatullah Kairanvi, *Izhar al-Haq: The Truth Revealed* (London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 2003).

contributed to the militant resistance against British rule in north India in 1857 among the Muslim *'ulamā'*.<sup>10</sup> However, even after 1857, Muslims and Christians continued to engage in religious debates.<sup>11</sup>

Debates between Christians and Muslims, between Arya Samajists and Muslims as well as those in between Muslim sects or sub-sects during the 1920s, are also mentioned by Barbara Metcalf. One such debate (between two sub-sects) was between Maulānā Maḥmūd Ḥasan Deōbandī (d. 1339/1920) and two Ahl-i Ḥadīth debaters. This debate was carried out by letters but the rhetorical devices and the tone was that of an oral *munāẓarah*.<sup>12</sup> In addition to this epistolary debate, there were face-to-face *munāẓarahs* between various sects of Muslims as well as Muslims and non-Muslims (Arya Samajists and Christians).<sup>13</sup> Such public events must have increased the consciousness of differing religious beliefs among urban populations. Thus, according to Barbara Metcalf:

Pious people at the time lamented divisiveness among Hindus or among Muslims, respectively. But that very competition helped create a familiarity with religious issues that was unprecedented in Indian history.<sup>14</sup>

Knowledge of these issues coupled with the increased means of communication which modernity makes this "familiarity" a potential source of increased conflict. It was probably because of this that the British authorities banned at least some highly inflammable religious literature between 1907 and 1947. The list of such material includes 26 works against Aḥmadīs by their opponents;<sup>15</sup> 13 anti-Shī'ah works by Sunnīs and 2 anti-Sunnī ones by the Shī'ah<sup>16</sup> as well as Muslim attacks on Hinduism and Sikhism and Hindu attacks on Islam.<sup>17</sup> However, the institution of the *munāẓarah* flourished under British rule as we have seen and the books now in circulation in Pakistan are not among those banned either by the British or by the Pakistani authorities.

Surprisingly, studies of Pakistani *madrasahs* pay little attention to the

<sup>10</sup> See, *ibid.*, 273.

<sup>11</sup> See, Barbara D. Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India: Deoband, 1860–1990*, repr. (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1989), 214.

<sup>12</sup> See, *ibid.*, 212–214. Also see, Zain Shirazi, "The 'Publicity' of Religious Discourse." For Maulānā Maḥmūd Ḥasan's arguments, see his *Adillah-i Kāmilah* (Kanpur: n.d.).

<sup>13</sup> See, for details, Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, 215–234.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

<sup>15</sup> See, Gerald N. Barrier, *Banned: Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India, 1907–1947* (Columbia, MI: University of Missouri Press, 1974), 172–175.

<sup>16</sup> See, *ibid.*, 202–203.

<sup>17</sup> See, *ibid.*, 184–185, 190.

*munāzarah*. Even the present author, who does mention it in passing, does not connect what he calls the *radd*-texts — Urdu writings meant to refute heresies, other sects and sub-sects and alien (Western) philosophies — with the *munāzarah* tradition.<sup>18</sup> Arshad Alam, an Indian scholar, calls the *radd*-texts of Tariq Rahman as ‘non-*dars*’ texts because they are not included in the printed curriculum of the Indian *madrasah* he describes.<sup>19</sup> He too does not explicitly connect these texts with the institution of the *munāzarah* but does go on to describe practices which are, indeed, the essence of that institution. For instance, he tells us that in the Madrasah Ashrafiyyah in Mubārakpūr, U.P. (District Azamgarh, India), every Thursday evening students form groups of twenty or more and make speeches and sing verses (*na‘t*) in praise of the Prophet (peace be on him). These speeches use arguments and other rhetorical skills to refute the ideas of the Deōbandīs. In another Barēlvī *madrasah*, Madrasah Ain al-Ulum [‘Ayn al-‘Ulūm] in Gayā, Bihar, one group of students act out the role of the Barēlvīs and the other of Deōbandīs. They ask questions and counter-questions and hone their debating skills — the very skills one needs in a *munāzarah* — till the Deōbandīs are defeated.<sup>20</sup>

The kind of literature which is the focus of attention here derives in important ways from the *munāzarah* tradition as practiced by the Urdu-using Muslims of India and Pakistan. As Urdu is understood by most educated Muslims in Pakistan and north India these books are internalized rather than Arabic ones. In some cases the books in circulation are actually transcripts of *munāzarabs* which took place between rival sub-sects such as the one between the Deōbandīs and Barēlvīs given below. In other cases they were written as tracts to refute rival sects, sub-sects or heresies. In such cases the style of argumentation, the use of irony, wit, poetry and other rhetorical devices come directly from the oral genre of the *munāzarah*. Even the acerbity of tone, so much the characteristic of a face-to-face encounter, is found in the books presumably because the words of the opponent with beliefs which are objectionable are quoted and the response they evoke is one of antagonism and anger. That is why I use the term *munāzarah*-literature as an alternative to my earlier term of *radd*-literature for the literature of religious controversy mentioned here.

### Ideological Divisions Necessitating Refutation

Pakistan is a Muslim majority country but there are sectarian, sub-sectarian

<sup>18</sup> See, Tariq Rahman, “Madrasas: The Potential for Violence in Pakistan,” 70–71.

<sup>19</sup> Arshad Alam, “Making Muslims: Identity and Difference in Indian Madrasas” in Jamal Malik, ed. *Madrasas in South Asia: Teaching Terror?*, 51.

<sup>20</sup> See, *ibid.*, 55–58.

and other ideological divisions within the Muslims of the country. First, there is the Sunnī-Shī'ah sectarian division.<sup>21</sup> Although no official figures are available, the *Shī'ah* are said to be a significant percentage of the total Muslim population of the country. However, no reliable or official figures exist to confirm the estimates that grossly vary. The Sunnī majority is divided among sub-sects (*maslaks*) such as the Barēlvīs, Deōbandīs, Ahl-i Ḥadīth and revivalist groups such as the Jamā'at-i Islāmī whose views will be described later. The Shī'ah are also sub-divided into sub-sects but these are not significant with respect to the dissemination of polemical literature because, in the face of such overwhelming Sunnī dominance, the Shī'ah of Pakistan do not flaunt their ideological differences in public nor is their literature openly on sale all over the country. Hence, it will only be the debates between Sunnīs which will be taken into account in this article.

It is not only the sects or *maslaks* which need to refute each other; it is also doctrines which are regarded as heretical such as those of the Aḥmadīs. The Aḥmadīs are followers of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad (d. 1326/1908) of the town Qādiyān now in India. He believed himself to be a messiah or a non-legislative Prophet.<sup>22</sup> He believed that Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) was the 'seal'—one who authenticates or is the most excellent—of the Prophets but not the last one (*khātām* = 'seal' and also 'the end').<sup>23</sup> The Aḥmadīs clashed with the other Muslims initially—Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad himself being given to debate—but are now merely struggling for survival as a non-Muslim minority in Pakistan. There are only 800 students in Aḥmadī *madrasahs* in Rabwah (Jhang District) but there is widespread alarm and many conspiracy theories to the detriment of the Aḥmadīs in Pakistan.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, certain Western ideologies—socialism, capitalism, individualism, etc.—are also refuted by the '*ulamā*'. In addition to that, in the context of 'comparative religions,' other religions such as Christianity are also refuted.

The number of *madrasah* students in the Punjab during 2005, according to police reports, are as follows:<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> For the rise of the Shī'ah sect see, S. M. H. Jafri, *The Origin and Early Development of Shi'a Islam* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>22</sup> A careful study of Mirzā Ghulām Aḥmad's works, indicates that he was inclined to make more exuberant claims than suggested by the author. Ed.

<sup>23</sup> See, Y. Friedmann, *Prophecy Continuous: Aspects of Ahmadi Religious Thought and Its Medieval Background* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989).

<sup>24</sup> See, Sajjad Shafiq Butt, "Deobandi Students Surpass Barelvīs in Pakistan Madrassa: Insightful Statistics," (2006) available at <[http://www.watandost.blogspot.com/2006/01/deobandi\\_students\\_surpass\\_barelvīs\\_in.html](http://www.watandost.blogspot.com/2006/01/deobandi_students_surpass_barelvīs_in.html)>.

<sup>25</sup> Source: Ibid.

Sects/sub-sects	Number of students	Percentage
Deōbandīs	200,246	45.4
Barēlvīs	199,733	45.2
Ahl-i Ḥadīth	34,253	7.8
Shī'ah	7,333	1.7
Total	441,565	–

The figures given by the Government of Pakistan for roughly the same period, this time about the number of *madrasahs* rather than students, are as follows:<sup>26</sup>

	Number of <i>Madrasahs</i> (2006)	Percentage
Deōbandīs	3454	30.1
Barēlvīs	2654	23.1
Ahl-i Ḥadīth	Not given	–
Jamā'at-i Islāmī	906	7.9
Shī'ah	Not given	–
Others	934	8.1
Not affiliated	3543	30.8
Total	11,491	–

The major *maslaks* of the Sunnīs are the Deōbandīs and the Barēlvīs. The Ahl-i Ḥadīth, also pejoratively called Wahhābīs, are far less in number. Let us, therefore, look at the Deōbandī and Barēlvī sub-sects in Pakistan. The Barēlvīs are followers of Aḥmad Razā Khān (d. 1340/1921) of Bareilly, a city in U. P. (India). The views of Barēlvīs which we encounter in the public, and with which we are concerned here, do not derive necessarily from the writings of Aḥmad Razā Khān.<sup>27</sup> However, because they are popular they are the focus of our attention here. The central belief of the Barēlvīs who enter into debate and discussion with the others is that the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) had knowledge of the unseen (*ʿilm al-ghayb*), that he was created from radiance (*nūr*), and that he had the power to intercede or help his followers in life and after death. Moreover, they also believe that the intercession of saints is possible and they control the events of the world through mystical, esoteric means.

The Deōbandī movement was founded in 1283/1866 at the *madrasah*

<sup>26</sup> Source: GOP, *National Education Census Pakistan 2006* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, Federal Bureau of Statistics, 2006), 215.

<sup>27</sup> For a biography of the founder and the development of his views see, Usha Sanyal, *Devotional Islam and Politics in British India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996). The views of Aḥmad Razā Khān concerning the Deōbandīs are given in English in *ibid.*, 235–248.

called the Dār al-'Ulūm Deōband at about 90 miles northeast of Delhi by Maulānā Qāsim Nānautvī (d. 1297/1880) and his associates.<sup>28</sup> The other great figure associated with this *madrasah* is Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangōhī (d. 1323/1905) who is regarded as one of the leaders and exemplars of the Deōbandī school of thought. The Deōbandīs regard the intercession of saints, the veneration of tombs, and other practices of folk Islam as sinful innovations (*bid'ah*). The major point of controversy with the Barēlvīs, however, was that they believed that the Prophet (peace be on him) had only as much knowledge of the unseen as God gave him and that he was made of earth like ordinary human beings.<sup>29</sup>

The Deōbandī-Barēlvī differences led to *munāẓarahs* which will be described in more detail below. However, even more importantly it has led to strained relations between the followers of the above two *maslaks* in Pakistan in the last decade or more. For instance, the number of the organizations of a social and political nature by 2003 was 245 out of which 48 were Barēlvīs and 44 were Deōbandīs. The two sub-sects have had theological quarrels which led to tension.<sup>30</sup>

While the Deōbandī-Barēlvī differences are the major focus of this article, other debated issues, such as the orthodox '*ulamā*'s (Deōbandī, Barēlvī and Ahl-i Ḥadīth) objections to the views of Abū 'l-A'lā Mawdūdī (d. 1399/1979);<sup>31</sup> the refutation of Shī'ah beliefs by Sunnī '*ulamā*'; and the objections to Western ideologies, again by the '*ulamā*,' are also touched upon in passing.

### The Place of the *Munāẓarah* Texts in Pakistan and North India

Although not part of the variant form of the Dars-i Nizāmī used in the *madrasahs* of South Asia, the *munāẓarah*-texts are used in them. One example is from Madrasah Ashrafiyyah (India) where, as mentioned earlier, these books

<sup>28</sup> See, Metcalf, *Islamic Revival in British India*, p. 88. Metcalf mentioned the year of foundation of Dār al-'Ulūm Deōband to be 1867, however, the website of Dār al-'Ulūm Deōband gives the exact date of its establishment to be Muḥarram 15, 1283/May 30, 1866. See: <<http://Darululoom-deoband.com>>. Ed.

<sup>29</sup> Maulānā Muḥammad Manzūr Nu'mānī, *Futūḥāt-i Nu'māniyyah*, ed. Maulānā Qarī 'Abd al-Rashīd (Lahore: Anjuman-i Irshād al-Muslimīn, 2002), 30 where he quotes the allegation of the Barēlvī *munāẓir* Maulānā Raḥīm Ilāhī. See for the details of the exact position of Deōbandī Scholars, Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānvī, *Ḥifẓ al-Īmān 'an al-Zaygh wa 'l-Tughyān* (Karachi: Maktabah As'adiyyah, 2004; first printed Lahore: Anjuman Irshād al-Muslimīn, 1980), 104–110. See also, Maulānā Khalīl Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī, *al-Muḥannad 'alā 'l-Mufannad, aka, 'Aqā'id 'Ulamā'-i Ahl-i Sunnat Deōband* (Lahore: Maktabat al-'Ilm, n.d.), 50–60. Ed.

<sup>30</sup> See, for details, *New Statesman* (24 September 2001).

<sup>31</sup> See, for details, Sayyid Vali Reza Nasr, *Mawdudi and the Making of Islamic Revivalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), *passim*.



were “extremely popular with students.”<sup>32</sup> The books were written to refute the doctrines or *maslak* of the Deōbandīs and the Ahl-i Ḥadīth. What the students learn are the central beliefs of their *maslak* and the arguments used to support them. And, therefore, the “identity which is created in such a setting is at once oppositional, depending on the negation of the other, feeding on a sense of being wronged, and committed to the ‘true Islam’ of their *maslak*.”<sup>33</sup>

The present author also found the *munāẓarah*-texts significant in the *madrasahs* of Pakistan. First, the printed syllabi of several *madrasahs* had books to refute the beliefs of the Aḥmadīs as well as rival sects (Sunnīs versus Shī‘ahs and the reverse); and sub-sects among Sunnīs themselves (Barēlvīs, Deōbandīs and Ahl-i Ḥadīth) as well as revivalist interpretations of Islam such as those of Mawdūdī. The Government of Pakistan’s Report on *Dīnī Madārās*<sup>34</sup> lists several such books including Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānautvī’s *Hadiyyat al-Shī‘ah*<sup>35</sup> — a polemical book refuting Shī‘ah beliefs — which remains in print.<sup>36</sup> After 2002, however, *madrasah* teachers do not admit to teaching anything which could incite sectarian violence. However, the *maslak* is still taught and the views of the major theorists—who contributed in varying degrees to the controversies between the *maslaks* and other ideological debates—are well known. The students also make speeches and learn the art of the *munāẓarah* from the fiery preachers who harangue their listeners through passionate sermons in the style of the *munāẓarah*.

The books about ideological controversy are in circulation since they are regularly printed and, besides the *madrasah*, they are read by other religious readers. Readers, therefore, form their views about religion, as well as their own religious identity, from these disputations and polemical tracts. There are also *munāẓarahs* on the internet including the one between the Sunnīs and the Shī‘ah on some points held in Manchester in 1999.<sup>37</sup> Some of them, including one between the Barēlvīs against the Deōbandīs and the Wahhābīs (which are called “*Bāṭil Firqahs*” = false sects) and which took place on 31 July 2006 is also available.<sup>38</sup> Others are available on <<http://www.Haqchaaryaar.net/>

<sup>32</sup> Alam, “Making Muslims: Identity and Difference in Indian Madrasas,” 51.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>34</sup> See GOP, *Dīnī Madāris kī Jāmi’ Rīpōrt* [Urdu: *The Complete Report of Religious Saminaries*] (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, Islamic Education Research Cell, 1988).

<sup>35</sup> Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānautvī, *Hadiyyat al-Shī‘ah* (Multan: Idārah-i Tālīfāt-i Ashrafiyyah, n.d.).

<sup>36</sup> See Annexure 1 below.

<sup>37</sup> See, “Manchester *Munāẓarah* 1999,” available at: <<http://www.aahlulhadeeth.net/php/modules.php?>>>.

<sup>38</sup> See, “19 *munazarahs* of Ahl-e-Sunnat ‘Ulamā’s with Batil Firqas (like Deobandi and Wahabis),” at <<http://www.nooremadinah.net/forumnoor/topic.asp?TOPICID=1823>>.

Munazara.html> and can be downloaded. Some of the sites are visited by many people.<sup>39</sup> It is not possible to claim whether this learning experience makes those exposed to them less tolerant of the religious “other” than they would have been if they had read other books of a religious nature. However, that the *munāzarah* creates or increases the possibility of sectarian antagonism cannot be denied.

## Religious Writings in the Public Domain

Most writings on Islam in South Asia are not about controversies nor are they polemical. They are commentaries on the Qur’ān (*tafsīr*); about *Ḥadīth*, and *Sīrah*, Islamic law (*Sharī’ah*) and theological studies of various kinds. In addition, there are a large number of books on various themes of folk Islam: *Nūr Nāmahs*, *Karbalā Nāmahs*, *Jang Nāmahs*, and so on. The *Nūr Nāmahs* trace out the creation of the world itself as contingent upon the being of the Prophet (peace be on him) who, it is believed, was made of radiance (*nūr*). The versified books in Urdu, Punjābī, Pashtō, Sindhi and other languages are about the presence of the *nūr*, or the spirit of the majesty of the Prophet (peace be on him) in the phenomenal world from eternity. The “*Karbalā*” and “*Jang*” *Nāmahs* are about the Battle of Karbalā (61/680) between the Umayyad caliph Yazīd ibn Mu‘āwiyah (r. 60–64/680–683) and Imām Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī (d. 61/680), the maternal grandson of the Prophet (peace be on him).

As mentioned earlier, these stories in verse are found in most of the languages used by the Muslims of South Asia. The present author has mentioned those in Urdu,<sup>40</sup> Punjābī,<sup>41</sup> Pashtō<sup>42</sup> and Sindhi<sup>43</sup> in some detail. Yet another sub-genre are books about the Islamic law and practices in these languages. These books, again in verse, are meant to instruct Muslims about the rituals of Islam and provide guidance to live according to Islamic norms of behaviour. Like the chapbooks on folk Islam, they too are in Punjābī,<sup>44</sup> Sindhi,<sup>45</sup> Pashtō,<sup>46</sup> Balōchi<sup>47</sup> and Brāhvi.<sup>48</sup> This sub-genre, which may be called the “*Sharī’ah* guide books,” finds its crowning achievement in the Urdu work

<sup>39</sup>For example, <www.yarasool.info>.

<sup>40</sup> See, Tariq Rahman, *Language, Ideology and Power: Language Learning Among the Muslims of Pakistan and North India*, revised edn. (Delhi: Orient Language, 2002), 208.

<sup>41</sup> See, *ibid.*, 386.

<sup>42</sup> See, *ibid.*, 356–360.

<sup>43</sup> See, *ibid.*, 328–329.

<sup>44</sup> See, *ibid.*, 381–386.

<sup>45</sup> See, *ibid.*, 328.

<sup>46</sup> See, *ibid.*, 356–358.

<sup>47</sup> See, *ibid.*, 431–432.

<sup>48</sup> See, *ibid.*, 429–430.

called the *Bahishtī Zēwar*<sup>49</sup> of Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī (d. 1362/1943) and the *Bahār-i Shari‘at*.<sup>50</sup> This book is in 20 volumes. The first 17 were written by Amjad Ali Qadiri Rizvi (d. 1367/1948), a disciple of Aḥmad Razā Khān, and the remaining three by his disciples after his death. The former is a Deōbandī work and the latter a Barēlvī one. While the former is written in simple Urdu and the verdicts (*fatāwā*) are given in synoptic and unequivocal terms so as not to confuse the reader, the latter contains detailed legal opinions and statements of faith which presume both learning and familiarity with the style of argumentation used by the ‘ulamā’. Possibly for these reasons the *Bahishtī Zēwar* is very well known even among those who are not Deōbandīs. Yet another form of popular religious literature is that which deals with after-life (called *Qiyāmat Nāmāhs* or *Aḥwāl-i Ākhirat*). One of the most popular books in circulation is the Urdu translation of Sayyid Quṭb’s *Manāẓir-i Qiyāmat*<sup>51</sup> which is an exposition of belief in the life hereafter and, hence, at a higher intellectual level than the ordinary popular books of this genre. Moreover, this is not a polemical work nor does it use the disputationist style of the *munāẓarah*. It merely selects texts from the Qur’ān and the *Ḥadīth* to describe the hereafter, hell, heaven and redemption. The book confirms beliefs which are already current among Pakistani Muslims.

All the sub-genres of Islamic writings mentioned above are outside the scope of the present article. They have been mentioned here in order to make it clear that the *munāẓarah* texts are not the only kind of learning input available to religious Pakistanis.

### The World of the *Munāẓarah*

The purpose of the *munāẓarah* was to convince the opponent of the falsity of his views. This was done by appeal to sacred texts and deductions from their implications. The debater, called *munāẓir*, began with courtesies and honorifics with names and, though the honorifics remained till the end, the courtesies gave place to anger, insinuations and insult. Both parties often ended by apostatizing the other and neither was persuaded to abandon their position. Victory was claimed by the party which was reporting the events. However, in some cases the official judge of the proceedings decided in favour of one party. In still other cases the assembled audience cheered one party which was

<sup>49</sup> Maulānā Muḥammad Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī, *Aṣṣī Mudalal wa Mukammal Bahishtī Zēwar* [Urdu: The Original Complete Heavenly Ornament], 11 parts, reprint (Karachi: Muḥammad Mushūr ‘Alī wa Muḥammad Munir ‘Alī, 1384/1964).

<sup>50</sup> Maulānā Amjad ‘Alī Qādiri Rizvī *Bahār-i Shari‘at*, reprint (Lahore: Ishtiaq Printers, 1996).

<sup>51</sup> Sayyid Quṭb, *Manāẓir-i Qiyāmat*, Urdu trans. from Arabic, Muḥammad Naṣrullah Khān (Gujrat: Maktabah-i Zafar, 1975).

then deemed to be the victor.

In all such discourses, rhetoric, figures of speech, sarcasm, wit and, of course, arguments from the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* are used to prove a point. As the language of the *munāẓarah* in Pakistan and north India is Urdu, a language which contains a vast tradition of amorous 'ghazal' poetry, the disputants (*manāẓirs*) use couplets which they otherwise condemn for their aesthetic, amorous and erotic references. Polemics and oratory are very much the weapons of the debaters but very often these degenerate into acerbic personal attacks, slander, and allegations of apostasy and heresy on the opponent and even vitriolic invectives.

Although the purpose of the *munāẓarah* was declared to be heuristic, it was not of immediate educational value because the atmosphere of the actual event was competitive, argumentative and belligerent. However, despite the anger and the polemics, the *munāẓarah* contributed to the educational discourse because it made the nature of the doctrinal disagreements clear. The hairsplitting which went with it brought out in the open what might have been taught in the *madrasah* or in a religious family but which did not come into relief in the absence of other, dissenting, opinions. It is, indeed, because of the *munāẓarah* tradition that sectarian and sub-sectarian orthodoxy defines itself, marks boundaries, and stands in opposition to its rival orthodoxies.

### Major Religious Controversies Among South Asian Muslims

The Shī'ah-Sunnī debate is found in a large number of books. The most famous refutation of Shī'ah beliefs from the Sunnī point of view is the *Hadiyyat al-Shī'ah* by Maulānā Muḥammad Qasīm Nānautvī. The book is in print and is being used in the Deōbandī *madrasahs* and read by many others though it was first published during the author's lifetime.

The style of writing is like that of a *munāẓarah* though the Shī'ah point of view is not from a member of that sect but is mediated through the Maulānā's thinking. At places Shī'ah opponents are mentioned and faults are found in their *munāẓarah* practices. For instance, he says at one point, "and which indecent person has taught him the art of *munāẓarah* that he gives an argument without proof?"<sup>52</sup> The purpose of the book is to refute Shī'ah beliefs—that the leadership of the Muslims descended to the Caliph 'Alī (d. 40/661) and his children from Fāṭimah al-Zahrā' (d. 11/632) the Prophet's daughter, who are called the *ahl-i bayt*. A number of other beliefs, that the Qur'ān has more than the thirty parts (*sipārahs*) which it has at present; that the first three caliphs were usurpers and, therefore, should be criticized

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<sup>52</sup> Nānautvī, *Hadiyyat al-Shī'ah*, 335.

(*tabarrā*),<sup>53</sup> that the spiritual leadership of the Muslims descended to ‘Alī and then to his heirs, the *imāms* (leaders), who can cancel, put in abeyance or modify all religious injunctions including even the orders of the Qur’ān and so on — are refuted at length. The writing takes on the acrimonious overtones of the *munāẓarah* in reference to the Shī‘ah opponent’s works which are cited repeatedly in the book. In this context it needs to be mentioned that remarks of the Shī‘ah writers—the ones cited here and others—are equally acrimonious and the personages revered by the Sunnīs are held up to criticism which necessarily appears to be harsh to Sunnīs.

The debate between the Sunnīs themselves, which are the focus of this article, are given in many books. One such book, summarized by Arshad Alam, giving the Barēlvī view against the Deōbandīs is called *Zalzalah*.<sup>54</sup> The book is written by Arshad ul Qādirī (d. 1423/2002) who graduated from the Barēlvī *madrasah* called the Mardrasah Ashrafiyyah in Mubārakpūr in 1944. He refuted the Deōbandī *maslak* in a number of books. *Zalzalah* was first published in 1972 and is circulated widely in India and Pakistan. The book begins with the well known Deōbandī argument that the Prophet (peace be on him) did not have knowledge of the unseen (*‘ilm-i ghayb*) except as much as God granted him. After referring to passages from the Deōbandī *‘ulamā’* claiming this, he points out that the Deōbandīs nevertheless credit their own leaders — Muḥammad Ismā‘īl (d. 1246/1831), Rashīd Aḥmad Gangōhī, Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī and Manẓūr Nu‘mānī (d. 1418/1997)—with such esoteric knowledge and supernatural powers.<sup>55</sup>

The second book *Da‘wat-i Inṣāf*<sup>56</sup> by Arshad ul-Qādirī develops the same arguments: the Deōbandī belief in the miracles of the elders of their own *maslak*; the alleged disrespect towards the Prophet (peace be on him) by denying him knowledge of the unseen; the Deōbandī preaching against visiting the graves of saints and denying that they constituted a “spiritual ladder” to the divine; and, finally, the Deōbandī belief that some of the folk practices of Indian Muslims are innovations (*bid‘ah*).<sup>57</sup> Qādirī subjects all these Deōbandī views to criticism and points out that they were internally inconsistent because, in fact, the Deōbandīs believed in the spiritual powers and knowledge of the unseen in the case of their pioneers. The books were written, as he put

<sup>53</sup> *Tabarrā* means to dissociate oneself from someone; in practice, though, it has meant criticism, even denunciation.

<sup>54</sup> Arshad ul-Qādirī, *Zalzalah* (Lahore: Shabbir Brothers, 1998).

<sup>55</sup> See, Alam, “Making Muslims,” 52–53.

<sup>56</sup> Arshad ul-Qādirī, *Da‘wat-i Inṣāf* (Delhi: Maktabah Jām-i Nūr, 1993).

<sup>57</sup> See, Alam, “Making Muslims,” 54.

it, to enable the Muslims to decide as to the justice of the case he presented to them.<sup>58</sup>

Another debate is between the Ahl-i Ḥadīth (called Wahhābīs) and the other Sunnī sub-sects. The Ahl-i Ḥadīth claim to get direct guidance from the Qur'ān, Ḥadīth and the information about the sayings and practices of the Companions of the Prophet. They do not, at least in theory, bind themselves to follow any of the traditional interpretations of the *fiqh*: Ḥanafī, Ḥanbalī, Mālikī and Shāfi'ī. Moreover, even more strictly than the Deōbandīs, they oppose the intervention of the saints and other institutions and beliefs of folk Islam.<sup>59</sup> However, the Ahl-i Ḥadīth are a small minority in Pakistan though they are much strengthened by the Saudi ideology of Wahhabism.

Yet another debate which went on among the *madrasah* 'ulamā' was occasioned by the writings of Abū 'l-A'lā Mawdūdī. One of the books in circulation is by Maulānā Muḥammad Zakariyyā Kandhlavī (d. 1402/1982) and called *Fitnah-i Mawdūdīyyat*.<sup>60</sup> Another book of this kind is by Muḥammad Sājīd Quraishī which argues that Mawdūdī's famous book *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān* is not in accordance with the established, orthodox principles of Qur'ānic exegesis. Whereas the orthodox practice accepts all the authentic traditions of the Prophet (*aḥādīth*) as true, Mawdūdī uses his personal sense of understanding of Islam which implies rejection of those traditions which, in his view, do not conform to the spirit of Islam. Quraishī rejects this argument and, moreover, alleges that Mawdūdī refers to the Bible which, therefore, gives prominence to Christian and Jewish scriptures which have been superceded by the Qur'ān.<sup>61</sup>

In the other book, *Fitnah*, the author claims that Mawdūdī deviates from the established meanings of concepts as they are understood by the 'ulamā'. First, he makes the case for understanding Islam without reference to the works of the traditional jurists and the 'ulamā' which is misleading. Second, he does not distinguish between worship (*'ibādāt*) and good conduct (*mu'āmalāt*) which is a religious deviation. And, third, he denigrates absorption into worship which, again, is misleading. In short, according to Zakariyyā, Mawdūdī's work is seriously misleading for ordinary Muslims and, therefore, may be considered as *fitnah*.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>58</sup> See Qādirī, *Zalzalah*, 182–183.

<sup>59</sup> See Muḥammad Yūsuf Ludhīyānvī, *Ikhtilāf-i Ummat aur Shīrāt-i Mustaqīm*, revised edn. (Karachi: Maktabah-'i Ludhīyānvī, 1975), 30–32.

<sup>60</sup> Maulānā Muḥammad Zakariyyā Kandhlavī, *Fitnah-i Mawdūdīyyat* (Lahore: Maktabah-'i al-Qāsim, 1975).

<sup>61</sup> See Muḥammad Sājīd Quraishī, *Tafhīm al-Qur'ān Main Aḥādīth Sharīfah par Bad I'timādī aur Bible par I'timād* (Multan: Kutab Khānah-'i Majīdiyyah, 1422 AH), passim.

<sup>62</sup> See Muḥammad Zakariyyā, *Fitnah-i Mawdūdīyyat*, passim.

Mawdūdī's own criticism of the traditional method of *madrasah* education on the grounds that it does not use the observational and inductive methods of obtaining knowledge is well known.<sup>63</sup> However, while he is impatient and dismissive of the traditional methods of knowledge, the 'ulamā' who oppose him catch every argument of his and test it according to their received interpretations and refute it with horror.

### The Case Study of a Paradigmatic *Munāẓarah* Book

The term "paradigm" is being used in Kuhn's meaning of "models or examples."<sup>64</sup> The book described below is a representative example of the way a *munāẓarah* is conducted and what the emotional tone of such an event is. However, the summarized arguments given below do not do justice to the book. This summary is based on actual *munāẓarahs* held between the Deōbandī debater Maulānā Muḥammad Manẓūr Nu'mānī and a number of his Barēlvī opponents. The *munāẓarahs* were held in several cities of British India and they were public events. As the Deōbandīs, who have transcribed them in this book, describe them as victories hence the name of the book is *Futūḥāt-i Nu'māniyyah*. The following *munāẓarahs* are recorded in *Futūḥāt-i Nu'māniyyah*.

- Munāẓarah-'i Durū 1928<sup>65</sup>
- Munāẓarah-'i Sanbhal 1928<sup>66</sup>
- Munāẓarah-'i Lahore 1933<sup>67</sup>
- Munāẓarah-'i Gayā 1936<sup>68</sup>
- Munāẓarah-'i Barēli 1935<sup>69</sup>
- Munāẓarah-'i Silānwālī 1936<sup>70</sup>

They are described below as succinctly as is consonant with the requirement of providing insights into the institution of the *munāẓarah* itself.

<sup>63</sup> See, Sayyid Abū 'l-A'la Mawdūdī, *Ta'limāt* (Lahore: Islamic Publications, 1974; Revised edn. Delhi: Markazī Maktabah'ī Islāmī, 1991), 60. Also see, Irfan Ahmed, "Power, Purity and the Vanguard: Educational Ideology of Jamā'at-i Islāmī Hind" in Jamal Malik, *Madrasa in South Asia: Teaching Terror?*, 149–151.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, revised edn. (London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 175.

<sup>65</sup> See, for details, Nu'mānī, *Futūḥāt-i Nu'maniyyah*, 22–102.

<sup>66</sup> See, for details, *ibid.*, 173–277.

<sup>67</sup> See, for details, *ibid.*, 295–419.

<sup>68</sup> See, for details, *ibid.*, 423–572.

<sup>69</sup> See, for details, *ibid.*, 577–712.

<sup>70</sup> See, for details, *ibid.*, 716–875.

## Munāẓarah-'i Durū

Durū is a small town in the Naini Tal district of India. The Muslim inhabitants of this town were mostly Barēlvīs. A certain *ḥakīm* (physician), called Muḥammad Ḥanīf, had a relative who was married to a certain Pīr Bakhsh's sister. The people of the town forced Pīr Bakhsh to get the marriage annulled on the grounds that the *ḥakīm* was a Deōbandī and this sub-sect (the Deōbandīs) were disrespectful towards the Prophet (peace be on him), did not believe in the end of prophethood, etc. The *ḥakīm*, therefore, requested his sub-sect to hold a *munāẓarah* with the Barēlvīs to clear these misunderstandings about his religious beliefs. The dates set for the event were the 18, 19 and 20th of July 1928.

Maulānā Muḥammad Ismā'īl and Maulānā Muḥammad Manẓūr Nu'mānī represented the Deōbandīs and Maulānā Raḥīm Ilāhī represented the Barēlvīs. Both parties arrived in Durū on 18 July and the magistrate of the town fixed the time and place of the *munāẓarah*. The debate was initiated by Maulānā Ismā'īl who praised the Prophet (peace be on him) but pointed out that, despite being perfect as a human being, he was not the creator and only God had that distinction. Raḥīm Ilāhī, in response, attacked an *ʿālim* of the Deōbandīs called Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānvī. After this the *munāẓarah* proper started.

Here the Deōbandī compiler claims that the Barēlvīs did not want to carry out with the *munāẓarah*, a claim which they make on other occasions too, but there is no independent means to verify this claim. However, when the *munāẓarah* starts the Deōbandīs are represented by Maulānā Manẓūr Nu'mānī while the Barēlvīs are represented by Raḥīm Ilāhī. The gist of the argument is the Deōbandī claim—made by Ashraf 'Alī Thānvī in *Ḥifẓ al-Imān*—that the Prophet (peace be on him) did not have knowledge of the unseen (*ilm al-ghayb*) except that much which was given to him by God. The Barēlvīs contested this and especially objected to the language used by Ashraf 'Alī Thānvī who said, while arguing that all beings have as much knowledge of the unseen as God gives them, that the Prophet (peace be on him) had as much knowledge of the unseen as God gave him and that animals, insane persons, etc. also had some knowledge of the unseen which God gave them. The Barēlvīs found this so offensive that they declared Maulānā Thānvī *an apostate* an unbeliever (*kāfir*).<sup>71</sup>

The *munāẓarah* lasted for three days. Besides the knowledge of the unseen, the end of prophethood was also discussed. The Deōbandīs clarified

<sup>71</sup> See, *ibid.*, 30; See for the correct position of Maulānā Ashraf 'Alī Thānvī, his, *Ḥifẓ al-Imān 'an al-Zaygh wa 'l-Ṭughyān*, 104–110.



that they did believe that Prophet Muḥammad (peace be on him) was the “seal of the Prophets” (*Khātām al-Nabiyyīn*) but the “Seal” was to be used both chronologically and qualitatively i.e. he was the best, or most exalted, too. Here, again, the Barēlvīs objected to the language used in the writings of the Deōbandīs. They contended that the Barēlvī argument that chronology in itself did not confer value was meant to denigrate the Prophet (peace be on him).

The *munāẓarah* lasted three days and, at least according to this account, the Barēlvīs very aggressively and repeatedly condemned the Deōbandīs as unbelievers (*kāfir*). Both the debaters used couplets in Urdu and Persian, some of them very amorous, in the course of their arguments. In the end the debate ended without any consensus except that another *munāẓarah* was to be held in Sanbhal from the 22nd till the 24th of October 1928.

### Munāẓarah-’i Sanbhal

Sanbhal is a town in District Murādābād, U.P., in India. The *munāẓarah* was held here on 24 and 25 October 1928. This time the Barēlvīs were represented by Maulānā Ḥashmat ‘Alī and the Deōbandīs, as before, by Maulānā Muḥammad Manẓūr Nu‘mānī. Once again the subjects discussed and the arguments used were much the same as before. On this occasion, however, the debaters asked each other for more written statements about particular points than before. The Barēlvīs celebrated their victory after the third day but, according to their opponents, this was only to cover their defeat.

### Munāẓarah-’i Lahore

This *munāẓarah* was scheduled to be held at Lahore in January 1933 but did not take place. According to the Deōbandīs the Barēlvīs forced the authorities to cancel it in view of the possibility of violence. The Deōbandī arguments which were to be used to refute the Barēlvīs were published in the form of a pamphlet and this is reproduced in the *Futūḥāt-i Nu‘māniyyah*.<sup>72</sup> Here the Deōbandīs argue that Aḥmad Razā Khān had apostasized Shāh Ismā‘īl Shāhid (d. 1246/1831) as well as the pioneers of the Deōbandī sub-sect (or movement) Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānutvī, Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangōhī and Maulānā Ashraf ‘Alī Thānvī. This *fatwā* was sent to the ‘ulamā’ of Makkah and Madīnah in 1323/1905 and they endorsed it. The Deōbandīs argued that this endorsement was obtained by quoting statements from the works of the above writers out of context. Thus, when the ‘ulamā’ of Arabia were apprised of the true import of the works in question, they took back their earlier

<sup>72</sup> Nu‘mānī, *Futūḥāt-i Nu‘māniyyah*, 295–419.

verdict. They did this, however, after asking twenty six questions in Arabic which were answered in writing in the same language by Maulānā Khalil Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī (d. 1346/1927). These are given in the original Arabic as well as Urdu translation in a book which is in circulation in Pakistan.<sup>73</sup>

### Munāẓarah-'i Gayā

Gayā is a city in the province of Bihār in India. The *munāẓarah* was held on 20–21 February 1936. The Deōbandīs, as before, were represented by Mulānā Manzūr Nu'mānī while the Barēlvīs were represented by Maulānā Ḥashmat 'Alī. Here, too, the Dēobandīs spent much energy on refuting the Barēlvī charge that their pioneers, such as Maulānā Nānautvī, were apostates. The subjects under discussion were the same as before and a number of written statements were exchanged. This time, however, on the second day there was so much unpleasantness that the authorities intervened and the *munāẓarah* was stopped.

### Munāẓarah-'i Barēlī

This was held at Barēlī between 27–30 April 1935 in the Madrasah Jāmi'ah Riẓviyyah which, being a Barēlvī stronghold, was considered an act of great moral courage by the Deōbandīs. Maulānā Sardār Aḥmad argued on behalf of the Barēlvīs and, as usual, Maulānā Nu'mānī on behalf of the Deōbandīs. The subjects dwelt upon were the same and the arguments were also the same. The *munāẓarah* continued for four days. In the end Muḥammad Shabbīr, the Secretary of the Islamic Commercial Committee, Lucknow and the patron and judge of the *munāẓarah* gave his verdict that the Deōbandīs were not heretics as alleged by their opponents.<sup>74</sup>

### Munāẓarah-'i Silāṇwālī

Silāṇwālī is a small town in district Sargodha, now in Pakistan. This *munāẓarah* was held here. The debater on behalf of the Barēlvīs was Maulānā Ḥashmat 'Alī and the Deōbandīs were represented by Maulānā Manzūr Nu'mānī. It began in February 1936. A president was elected and terms and conditions, including the time to be given to each debater, were agreed upon. The subjects and the arguments were the same as before. This time too there was much heated debate and the atmosphere became very hostile by the end of the *munāẓarah*.

<sup>73</sup> Maulānā Khalil Aḥmad Sahāranpūrī, *al-Muḥannad 'alā 'l-Mufannad* aka 'Aqā'id 'Ulamā-'i Ahl-i Sunnat Deōband, passim.

<sup>74</sup> See, Nu'mānī, *Futūḥat-I Nu'māniyyah*, 289–291.

These *munāzarahs* have been given in some detail so as to give some idea of how the debate was governed by rules. However, once emotions were stirred up, the opponents descended from arguments to polemics and even to invectives. Their relevance as extra curricular reading material for *madrasah* students and general readers of a religious orientation is testified by the fact that they are still in print.

It should be mentioned here that not all books in circulation in Pakistan, even about religious controversies, follow the discursive features of the *munāzarah*. Some are descriptive in a style which nearly imitates academic writing. *Ikhtilāf-i Ummat*, for instance, has been written from a Deōbandi point of view but is not in the *munāzarah* tradition.<sup>75</sup>

### The *Munāzarah* and Reform in Religious Education in Pakistan

As brought out in the previous sections, the institution of the *munāzarah* brings out the ideological differences which lie at the core of the different sects, sub-sects (*maslak*) and the Islamic identity, as differentiated from non-Islamic and secular Muslim identities, among Pakistani Muslims. However, only the students of *madrasahs* are taught the art of disputation while other religious people do not get any formal training of this kind. Other people are, however, exposed to *munāzarahs* which take place from time to time and, more often, to the books based upon them which have been mentioned earlier. They are also exposed to the internet versions of *munāzarahs* and the audio-tapes of some famous events of this kind. Above all, since every leader of prayers (*imām*) picks up the verbal style of the *munāzarahs*, the congregations of Friday prayers and other such events are often also exposed to argumentation of this kind.

As such, it is surprising that the *munāzarah* and the books on refuting other opinions (*munāzarah*-texts) are not mentioned in any proposal on reforming Islamic education in Pakistan. The International Crises Group (ICG), for instance, has written several reports about the *madrasahs* and Islamic militancy in Pakistan. The assumption of the ICG, in common with other Pakistanis, is that modern education can counteract the tendency towards violence which religious education will presumably create. Thus one report says:

There are many precedents that show that modern education can coexist with these two features of *madrasah* education. NGOs such as National Rural Support Program have helped some local communities to transform their

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<sup>75</sup> See n. 59 above.

*madrasahs* by including modern education. The religious identity remains intact but there is less emphasis on traditional subjects.<sup>76</sup>

Christopher Candland, who has published on this very subject, points out, however, that many *madrasahs* do “teach these subjects” (natural sciences, computer studies, etc.) but that modern education “is not a guarantee of an enlightened mind.”<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the Islamist militants who were involved in the 9/11 attacks had generally attended secular educational institutions.<sup>78</sup> However, Candland too does not recommend anything except an “alternative curriculum” based on those teachings from the seared texts which teach one “how to relate peacefully with other communities through goodwill and tolerance.”<sup>79</sup>

Many officials and foreign donors working on the *madrasahs* of Pakistan blame the Dars-i Nizāmī, which they claim, is stagnant and very conservative because some texts in it come from the 13th century.<sup>80</sup> However, these texts are about purely theological matters which do not emphasize *jihād* to the exclusion of other duties. Moreover, because they belong to the medieval age they do not refer to contemporary events which Muslims regard as being unfriendly acts towards them. Among these are the creation of Israel by dislocating Palestinian Arabs from their homes, the discriminatory policies of Israelis towards them later, the post-9/11 occupation of the US and its allies of Islamic lands such as Afghanistan and Iraq. These contemporary realities create and sustain the anti-Western backlash among Muslim countries which we are witnessing and it is not the Dars-i Nizāmī but the scores of pamphlets written in the polemical style of the *munāẓarah* which are sold outside mosques which make people more intensely aware of them.

Moreover, the Dars-i Nizāmī is in Arabic and is memorized (though, like textbooks in secular institutions, they are not meant to be memorized) while the *munāẓarah* texts are in Urdu and are internalized. They provide ready-made arguments which the debater or preacher can use easily and which the

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<sup>76</sup> ICG, *Pakistan: Madrassas, Extremism and the Military* (Islamabad: International Gisis Group, 2002), 29.

<sup>77</sup> Christopher Candland, “Pakistan’s Recent Experience in Reforming Islamic Education” in Jamal Malik, *Madrassa in South Asia: Teaching Terror?*, 111.

<sup>78</sup> See, O. Roy, *Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, in association with, the Centre d’Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, Paris, 2004), 310.

<sup>79</sup> Candland, “Pakistan’s Recent Experience in Reforming Islamic Education,” 111.

<sup>80</sup> The curriculum is described in Francis Robinson, *The Ulema of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (Lahore: Ferozsons, 2002), 249–251. More details are in G.M.D. Sufi, *al-Minhāj Being the Evolution of Curriculum in the Muslim Educational Institutions of India* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adbiyat-i Dillī, 1941), 17.

audience understands and responds to emotionally. Also, the Dars-i Nizāmī precedes the Deōbandī, Barēlvī and Mawdūdī interpretations of Islam. It does not even dwell upon the Shī'ah-Sunnī differences nor does it refer to the heresies of the present time. It is mainly concerned with theological matters and these are far removed from the antagonistic religious identities which are in conflict with each other in Pakistan today. In short, it is not the Dars-i Nizāmī, which consists of the Qur'ān, *Ḥadīth* and exegesis which creates the sectarian intolerance among the *madrasah* students but the *munāẓarah* texts which are extra-curricular and, therefore, normally ignored by would-be reformers of *madrasahs*. For the same reasons, those religious readers whose staple fare is not the canonical texts of Islam nor the eclectic and tolerant writings of the mystics, would also tend to be sectarian and intolerant. A large number of religious readers, however, confine themselves to prayer books, the Qur'ān and chapbooks of mystical or folk Islam. Thus, even among religious readers, it cannot be claimed that the texts described above are the only informal learning experience available to Pakistanis. What can be suggested, however, is that those who are exposed to the *munāẓarah* texts are more liable to develop a disputatious, intolerant religious identity than others. To sum up, the *munāẓarah* texts rather than mainstream religious education contribute to the acerbity and friction which makes the Pakistani religious scene a matter of concern for those who aspire for peace and amity in the country.

These pamphlets and books will not form part of any scheme for curricular reform since they are not part of the Dars-i Nizāmī. Indeed, no college or university course on Islam even mentions them and, while some *madrasah* syllabi do refer to them as supplementary reading material, not all of them do so. This means that *madrasah* reforms, as presently envisaged, cannot remove a major cause of intolerance towards other religious and ideological beliefs. Inasmuch as these are influenced by the *munāẓarah*-texts, they will remain part of the Pakistani religious worldview.

This being so, can such polemical texts be banned? In view of the British experience of banning controversial literature—such literature went underground and banning itself went with authoritarianism<sup>81</sup>—it would be unrealistic to suggest such an extreme measure. It would provide the Islamists with another grievance, undermine democratic values further, and probably backfire as such literature will then go underground.

Working with the '*ulamā*' to reduce the volume of such writings could have positive results. But, above all, let us remember that ideological differences have always been a part of the Islamic world and, indeed, of all

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<sup>81</sup> Barrier, *Banned: Controversial Literature and an Political Control in British India 1907–1947*, passim.

religions and secular ideologies all over the world and in throughout known history. They are being translated now in Pakistan, as they have sometimes been in the past, in violence because of government policies. For instance, people were recruited in the name of *jihād* to fight the proxy wars of USA against the Soviet Union's military occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. Likewise, they were encouraged to infiltrate across the line of control in Kashmir, etc. Being armed and inspired with religious zeal, such people subsequently indulged in sectarian killings in Pakistan and are now trying to impose a code of life they regard as sacred upon the whole country. These are political and economic matters and the solutions must be political and economic. Curricular reform — especially that which does not touch upon the informal input into religious education — will hardly change the present realities in Pakistan.



## ANNEXURE-1

Books Prescribed as Reading Material for *Madrasah* Students

Deōbandis <sup>82</sup>		
Christianity	<i>‘Isā’iyyat kiya Hai?</i>	Maulānā Muḥammad Taqī ‘Uthmānī
Aḥmadi Beliefs	<i>Qāidiyānī Madhhab;</i> <i>Qāidiyāniyyat</i> and 6 other books.	Muḥammad Ilyās Barnī Abu’l Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadvī
Unbelief *	<i>Islām aur Maghribiyyat kī Kashmakash</i> and 8 other books	Abu’l Ḥasan ‘Alī Nadvī
Socialism/ Communism	<i>Ishtirākiyyat aur Islām</i>	Mas’ūd ‘Ālam Nadvī
	<i>Islām aur Ishtirākiyyat</i> and 2 other books.	Maulānā Kāndhalvī
Shī’ism	<i>Hadiyyat al-Shī’ah</i>	Maulānā Muḥammad Qāsim Nānautvī
	<i>Hidāyat al-Shī’ah</i> and 6 other books.	Maulānā Rashīd Aḥmad Gangōhī
Barēlvī Beliefs	14 books including those by Muḥammad Manzūr Nu’mānī	
Other ‘false beliefs’ ( <i>firqāhā-‘i bāṭilah</i> )	<i>Jā’izah;</i> <i>‘Ilmī Muḥāsabah;</i> <i>Maudūdī Madhhab</i> and 11 other books.	Abū Khālīd; Qāzī Mazhar Ḥusain; Qāzī Mazhar Ḥusain
BARĒLVĪS <sup>83</sup>		
Books under “ <i>Taqābul-i Adyān</i> ” (comparative religions) are not specified except for the author in his field study was informed that the main book that is taught in various Barēlvī <i>madaris</i> in this connection is <i>Bahār-i Shari‘at</i> (vol. 1), by Maulānā Amjad ‘Alī Qādirī Rizvī.		
AHL-I HADĪTH <sup>84</sup>		
Their selection of books on “ <i>Taqābul-i Adyān</i> ” and “ <i>Radd-i Firq Bāṭilah</i> ” are also not mentioned in the report.		
SHĪ’AH <sup>85</sup>		
The Report does not mention their selection of books under their category “ <i>Taḥqīq-i Adyān wa Madhāhib</i> ” (research on religions and ideologies).		

<sup>82</sup> Source GOP, *Dinī Madāris kī Jāmi‘ Riport*, 71–74.

\* Though given under the label of refutation of “unbelief,” the book refutes and criticizes modernity and argues that the West dominates Muslim countries through their own elite.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 75<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 91–92.<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 93.

These books are not part of the traditional Dars-i Nizāmī. Not all of them are written in the *munāẓarah* style. However, their purpose is to refute the doctrines of others.

